

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-15 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 4 are amended to address the objections thereto.

In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

**I. Claim Objections**

Claims 1, 4-5, 11-12 and 15 were objected to because of alleged informalities.

Applicant has amended claims 1 and 4 to overcome the objections made by the Patent Office. Specifically, Applicant has replaced the phrase "characterized in that" with "wherein."

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections are respectfully requested.

**II. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)**

Claims 1-3, 6-10 and 13-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,956,008 ("Takeshima"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Takeshima is a U.S. patent issued on October 18, 2005. The filing date of Takeshima is May 13, 2003. Takeshima is thus available as a reference under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as of its filing date (May 13, 2003).

However, Applicant submits the attached 37 C.F.R. §1.131 Declaration as evidence that the subject matter claimed in the present application was reduced to practice prior to May 13, 2003, the earliest U.S. filing date of Takeshima. The present application is related to Japanese Application JP 2002-81583 that was filed more than one year before the present application was filed in the U.S. A verified English translation of JP 2002-81583, filed on March 22, 2002 in Japan, is included in the 37 C.F.R. §1.131 Declaration (see Exhibit A attached to the Declaration). The translation confirms that the present claims are described in

JP 2002-81583, and thus establish that the presently claimed invention was reduced to practice prior to Takeshima. Therefore, the reference is antedated and the rejection should be withdrawn.

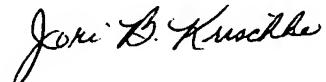
For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the teachings of Takeshima are not prior art to the present claims. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

**III. Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-15 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff  
Registration No. 27,075

Jori B. Krischke  
Registration No. 57,349

JAO:JBK/rav

Attachment:

37 C.F.R. §1.131 Declaration

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**OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC**  
**P.O. Box 19928**  
**Alexandria, Virginia 22320**  
**Telephone: (703) 836-6400**

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